

ought to be to just involve handing a check to an older person and say, "Well, ma'am, buy health care until your money runs out. If the cost of your care is greater than your check, well, so be it." I think it is important to have guaranteed, secure, defined benefits. Many Senators have stood for this principle. It is at the heart of my legislation.

Let me also say that I believe that many Senators on the other side of the aisle have been absolutely right in saying that it is time to bring more competition and more choice to the Medicare Program. Many Senators on the other side of the aisle have made the case that competitive models—be it the Federal employee health plan or be it the private sector—ought to be the kind of approach that we look to for 21st century Medicare. I believe they are right. I believe, in addition, that it is now possible to forge a bipartisan coalition on Medicare between the two parties, where those who have advocated for guaranteeing secure, defined benefits can work with those who have called for more competition and more choice and the kinds of changes that have come to the private sector.

What it comes down to, Mr. President, is, will the Senate have the political will to do it? Will the Senate have the vision to see beyond the next electoral ridge? I believe that there is an extraordinary opportunity now to set out a foundation for the next century. We know that in the next century we are going to have to be dealing with the question of whether, hypothetically, Lee Iaccoca ought to be paying more for his Medicare than should a woman who is 75 years old and on a low income who suffers from Alzheimer's. I didn't address it in my legislation, but I happen to think that ought to be done. Senators will have different views on that issue.

Mr. President, I am not convinced that's the issue that has to be tackled right now. The issue that has to be tackled by the Senate right now is to come up with \$100 billion of hard savings to deal with the budget resolution and the short-term financial challenge of Medicare and then to lay the foundation for the next century. The foundation for the next century can build on some very good work being done by Senators of both political parties. I have been meeting with those Senators privately.

I will have more to say during this week, Mr. President, for I intend to go into further detail on my comprehensive Medicare reform legislation every day this week. I will close with one last point. This issue is so important to our country and so important to the Senate that I believe in the next century—2010, 2020, 2030—people are going to ask everyone in public life today: What did you do to try to get Medicare on track?

I believe the legislation I have introduced opens up the opportunity for bipartisan discussions toward Medicare reform. I have had a number of those

already with Chairman DOMENICI, Chairman GRAMM on the other side of the aisle, and have been very gracious in that regard. I have had a chance to talk to the minority leader, Senator DASCHLE, and Senator KENNEDY, who have done so much good work.

Mr. President, I close by saying that my concern is to make sure that the Senate, after years of bitter and acrimonious discussions on Medicare, now tries to approach it in a different way, in a bipartisan way, in a way that will allow us to tap the revolution of private sector health care, in a way that is good for patients, and in a way that is good for seniors and for taxpayers.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

HONORING THE MAPLES ON THEIR 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, families are the cornerstone of America. The data are undeniable: Individuals from strong families contribute to the society. In an era when nearly half of all couples married today will see their union dissolve into divorce, I believe it is both instructive and important to honor those who have taken the commitment of till death us do part seriously, demonstrating successfully the timeless principles of love, honor, and fidelity. These characteristics make our country strong.

For these important reasons, I rise today to honor Richard and Beatrice Maple of Sedalia, MO, who on April 19 will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. My wife, Janet, and I look forward to the day we can celebrate a similar milestone. The Maples' commitment to the principles and values of their marriage deserves to be saluted and recognized.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NUCLEAR WASTE POLICY ACT AMENDMENTS—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on the motion to proceed.

The Senate resumed consideration of the motion to proceed.

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on Senate bill 104, the Nuclear Waste Act, occur at 5:15 on Tuesday, with the time between 2:15 and 5:15 equally divided between the proponents and opponents.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I thank the Chair. I wish the occupant of the chair a good afternoon.

The Senate proceeded to consider the motion to proceed.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I am going to be speaking this afternoon at some length on Senate bill 104. This is a bill that provides a comprehensive plan for the Federal Government to meet its obligations to provide a safe place to store spent nuclear fuel and nuclear waste.

Mr. President, I think it is important to reflect on some of the background associated with nuclear waste and the status of our continued dependence on nuclear energy.

First of all, let me refer to an article by Bertram Wolfe. Mr. Wolfe is a consultant at Monte Sereno, CA, and a former president of the American Nuclear Society. He suggests that by midcentury, the Third World population on this Earth will double from 4 billion to 8 billion people while the population of the industrial world will grow by about 20 percent, to 1.2 billion. He further suggests that unless we expect to see the majority of the world's people living indefinitely in dire poverty, we should be prepared for per capita energy use to rise rapidly with economic progress. Even if the Third World per capita energy use rises to only one-third of the United States level, that increase, in combination with the expected population growth, will result in a threefold increase in world energy use by the year 2050.

He further suggests that if fossil fuels are used to supply these increased energy needs, we can expect serious deterioration of air quality and possibly environmental disaster from global climate change due to the greenhouse effect. In addition, increased demand for fossil fuels, combined with the dwindling supply, undoubtedly will lead to higher prices, slower economic growth, and the likelihood of energy-related global conflicts.

I wonder if anyone in this Chamber would doubt that Kuwait's oil resources were a major factor in the United States willingness to take military action against Iraq. Unfortunately, alternatives to this scenario are few. Perhaps the future world energy use can be stabilized at a level much less than a third of present U.S. per capita use. Of course, that demand could be much higher. Perhaps solar or wind power will become practical on a larger scale. Perhaps fusion, or even cold fusion, will be developed. But as we enter the world's energy needs in the 21st century, we have to focus on one area that currently provides us with nearly 21 percent of our electricity in the United States, and that is nuclear power. Even conventional nuclear powerplants will face fuel supply problems in the next century if their use expands significantly, which is why we ought to consider the use of the advanced liquid metal reactor which can produce more than 100 times as much energy per pound of uranium as conventional reactors.